

Please Read and Keep!

PROPOSED CONSTITUTION
of
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CONGREGATIONS

*Adopted and recommended by the Evan-
gelical Lutheran Augustana Synod
in North America.*



Adopted at the synodical meeting in New Britain,
Conn., 1907, and amended 1915—1927.

ROCK ISLAND, ILL.
Augustana Book Concern

FORM OF CALL TO BE EXTENDED TO A PASTOR

Grace and Peace!

We the undersigned, members of the Church Council of the Ev. Lutheran.....church in.....hereby respectfully extend to you a call to become the pastor of the above congregation with a yearly salary of (here enter the amount of salary and other perquisites fixed by the congregation). The congregational meeting for the purpose of calling a pastor was duly announced as prescribed by the constitution, and we enclose herewith a correct extract of the record of the proceedings at the above meeting. We would respectfully request that the call be answered as soon as possible. We sincerely hope that you may find it to be in accordance with God's will to give to this call your affirmative answer.

On behalf of the congregation,

Respectfully,

Members	{
of the Church	
Council	

CONSTITUTION

of the

Evangelical Lutheran *Trinity*
Church in *Astoria, Ore*

In the Name of Jesus Christ.

Preamble.

Inasmuch as all things in the Church of Christ ought, according to the Word of God (1 Cor. 14: 40; Col. 2: 5), to be done decently and in order, we, the members of the Ev. Luth. *Trinity*.. church in *Astoria, Ore*.. have unanimously agreed upon and adopted the following Constitution, and do hereby solemnly pledge ourselves, before God and before one another, to be governed by its provisions.

ART. I.

Name.

§ 1. The legal name of this Congregation shall be the Evangelical Lutheran *Trinity*.. Church in *Astoria, Ore*..

§ 2. This name shall not be changed except in manner as prescribed by the laws of the State.

ART. II.

Doctrine.

§ 1. This Congregation, as a Christian Church in general, and as an Evangelical Lutheran Church in particular, acknowledges the Holy Scriptures as the revealed word of God and as the only sufficient and infallible rule and standard of faith and practice, and accepts and confesses not only the three oldest Symbols (the Apostolical, the Nicene, and the Athanasian), but also the unaltered Augsburg Confession as a brief but true exposition of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, said Confession being understood in accordance with the further development of these doctrines as contained in the other symbolical books of our Lutheran Church.

§ 2. Orthodox books shall be used at divine services as well as for the instruction of the youth.

ART. III.

The Pastor.

§ 1. The pastor of this Congregation must be duly examined, legally called, and fully authorized to perform the duties of his office, and must be a member of the same Lutheran Synod with which this Congregation is connected. If he is not a member at the time when he assumes his office as pastor he shall join the Synod at its next meeting.

§ 2. The pastor shall preach the Word of God and administer the Holy Sacraments in full accordance with the Confession of this Congregation (Art. II); he shall be a true and sincere Christian, lead a godly and exemplary life, visit the sick and the destitute, be diligent in the religious instruc-

tion and proper training of the young, comfort, instruct, reprove, admonish, and warn, both publicly and privately, as the Word of God directs (2 Tim. 4. 2).

§ 3. As soon as possible after entering upon his duties as pastor of the Congregation, the pastor shall be solemnly installed by the President of the Conference, assisted by some neighboring pastors. At the installation the pastor shall pledge himself to teach, publicly and privately, in accordance with the Confession of the Church.

§ 4. He shall keep and preserve accurate records, such as Church Record, Records of Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages, and Deaths.

§ 5. He shall preside, by virtue of his office, at all congregational meetings, and at all meetings of the Church Council and of the joint Board of Deacons and Trustees, and he shall also have the right to preside at the meetings of other organizations connected with the Church.

§ 6. Charges against the pastor, if supported by the testimony of two or three witnesses, shall be communicated to him in writing and thereupon submitted to the President of the Conference, who shall see that the matter be properly attended to in accordance with the Constitution of the Conference.

§ 7. If the pastor intends to accept a call from another congregation, or desires for other reasons to resign his charge, he shall tender his resignation, in writing, to the Church Council not less than three months before the actual termination of his services as pastor of this church. Upon

receipt of the pastor's resignation, the Church Council shall immediately call a meeting of the Congregation for the purpose of acting upon the resignation.

ART. IV.

The Board of Administration.

§ 1. The Board of Administration shall consist of the pastor, the Deacons, and the Trustees. Meetings of this Board shall be called at the discretion of the pastor.

§ 2. The number of deacons shall be not less than ~~3~~... nor more than ~~12~~... elected for a term of three years, in such manner that ~~13~~... are retired and ~~13~~... elected each year*

§ 3. The number of trustees shall not be less than ~~3~~... nor more than ~~12~~... elected for a term of three years, in such a way that ~~13~~... are retired and ~~13~~... elected each year.* The trustees must qualify according to the laws of the State.

§ 4. Only such members shall be elected deacons or trustees who are known to be sincere in their faith and true to the confession of the Church.

§ 5. The deacons and the trustees shall, if possible, be duly installed in their offices.

§ 6. It shall be the duty of this Board to see that the pastor of the Congregation receives adequate temporal support as the Word of God directs. They shall also manage and act upon such

* When a new congregation is organized some are therefore elected for one year, some for two, and some for three years, according to the number agreed upon. The number should be proportionate to the membership of the congregation.

matters of general importance as do not specifically come within the province of the Church Council or the Board of Trustees.

§ 7. The Board shall exercise a general supervision over the affairs of the Congregation, to the end that all matters pertaining to it, and especially its divine services, be conducted decently and in order.

§ 8. If any Church officer prove guilty of carelessness in the performance of his duties, the Church Council shall give proper warning and admonition. If such admonition and warning be not heeded, the Church Council may suspend such officer until next yearly congregational meeting, when the matter is to be acted upon, and the accused, if found guilty, be deposed and another chosen for the remainder of his term.

§ 9. In case of vacancy in the Church Council or Board of Trustees, the Joint Board may elect some person to serve until the next annual meeting of the Congregation.

ART. V.

The Church Council.

§ 1. The Church Council shall consist of the pastor and the deacons. When the Congregation is vacant, or the pastor prevented from being present, the Church Council shall elect a chairman from their own number.

§ 2. The Church Council shall annually elect one of its own number as secretary, who shall keep an accurate record of all the proceedings and resolutions of the Council.

§ 3. The pastor shall convene the Church Council whenever he shall find it necessary, or upon the request of three of its members. If the Congregation be without a pastor, the secretary shall convene the Council upon the request of the same number of its members.

§ 4. For the legal transaction of business at least two thirds of the members of the Council must be present. In the absence of the pastor no business shall be transacted without his consent, unless the Congregation is vacant.

§ 5. As members of the Church Council the deacons shall, by the help of God, in private as well as in public, in word and deed lead a consistent and exemplary Christian life; they shall also use all diligence to further the cause of Christianity; and, in the absence of the pastor and at his request, they shall be responsible for the public church services.

§ 6. The Church Council shall constitute the Board of School Directors of the Congregation, and as such see that the children and youth are duly instructed in the Christian religion, and that schools for this purpose are established and maintained.

§ 7. The Church Council shall take an active interest in mission work and shall collect funds for this purpose. To this end the Council may annually appoint a treasurer of mission funds, who, however, shall render account to the Board of Trustees.

§ 8. The Church Council shall earnestly endeavor to practice Christian benevolence amongst

the sick, the poor, the afflicted and defenseless, whether members of the Congregation, or not.

§ 9. Should such a deplorable thing happen, that any member of the Congregation renounces, misinterprets, or openly opposes the doctrines of the Church, or becomes guilty of sins, such as drunkenness, licentiousness, profanity, desecration of the Lord's day, malice, or slander; or if he joins any infidel society, whether secret or not secret, or conducts himself in such a manner as to cause offence and to grieve the Church of Christ, it shall be the duty of the Church Council to discipline such a member (Mt. 18. 15-18; 1 Cor. 5; Eph. 5. 11, 12).

1) In all cases where church discipline is called for, the words of the Saviour in Mt. 18. 15-18 must strictly be observed.

2) In cases of church discipline, the person concerned shall be served with a written summons by the pastor to appear before the Church Council. This summons shall be served at least three days before the meeting of that body. Should such person fail to appear without pleading sufficient cause, the Council may proceed with the trial, and pass judgment in his absence.

3) When it is deemed necessary to examine witnesses, the Council shall have the right to require each member called to testify to make the following affirmation: I solemnly affirm, before God, that in my testimony I shall speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Whenever a civil oath is considered necessary, it shall be administered by a Justice of the Peace or some other properly authorized officer.

4) Should the accused be found guilty and admonition prove ineffectual, the Council shall, according to circumstances, suspend or excommunicate him, as the Word of God prescribes. An excommunicated person shall forfeit all right to any share of the real or personal property of the Congregation.

5) Every resolution of the Church Council concerning suspension or excommunication of a member shall, as soon as possible, be communicated to him in writing.

6) Any member who is dissatisfied with the decision of the Council in his case may appeal to the Conference, provided he gives the Council written notice of his intention within thirty days after being informed of the decision and states reasons for his appeal. The decision rendered by the Conference shall be final.

7) The Church Council shall restore to the full enjoyment of the privileges of the Church such suspended or excommunicated persons as give satisfactory evidence of true repentance and reformation.

§ 10. If the Church Council deems it necessary, it may hold its sessions within closed doors, and during the discussion pending the decision in disciplinary matters, the parties concerned shall withdraw.

§ 11. The pastor of the Congregation shall have power to exclude temporarily from the Lord's Supper persons whose life he deems unworthy of their profession. Any one dissatisfied with the action of the pastor may appeal to the Church Council.

ART. VI.

The Board of Trustees.

§ 1. Within ten days after the annual congregational meeting the trustees shall meet for the purpose of organizing; at this meeting a president, a secretary, and a treasurer shall be elected for the ensuing year.

§ 2. The trustees shall hold in trust, for the use and benefit of this Congregation, its real and personal property, and keep and carefully preserve all deeds and other valuable documents.

§ 3. They shall have no power, in the name and on behalf of the Congregation, either to buy, sell, let, or mortgage any real or personal property, or to erect any church edifice, dwelling house, or other building, unless properly authorized by the Congregation to do so.

§ 4. They shall have no power to exclude the pastor from the pulpit, or the Congregation from the church, or in any way hinder the pastor in the exercise of his duties.

§ 5. It shall be their duty to make and keep a correct inventory of all the property of this Congregation, and append the same to the annual accounts; to keep the church and other buildings belonging to the Congregation in necessary repair, and they shall be authorized to expend for such repairs a sum, not exceeding *200*...dollars; and they shall guard against damage or destruction of all other property of the Congregation, and receive all the incomes of the Congregation and render account thereof.

§ 6. The trustees shall be jointly and severally

responsible to the Congregation for all moneys and other property belonging to the Congregation. The treasurer shall keep accurate account of all receipts and expenditures and shall, upon their request, present the same to the other trustees. Before the annual meeting of the congregation he shall prepare a correct statement of his accounts, and present it, properly audited, to the Congregation.

ART. VII.

Members.

§ 1. Reception of members.

1) Children and unbaptized adults shall be received through baptism, according to the church forms used in the orthodox Lutheran Church. Before the young are admitted to their first communion, they shall be properly instructed by the pastor in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, as taught in Luther's Smaller Catechism, and thereupon duly confirmed. Adults shall also be instructed before their baptism, and not only their religious knowledge, but also their Christian character carefully inquired into; in their case baptism becomes equivalent to confirmation.

2) A person already baptized and confirmed, who desires to become a member of this Congregation, shall make application to the pastor, who, partly by private conversation with the applicant and partly through consultation with the Church Council, shall carefully inform himself as to his Christian character; for no person shall be received as a member of this Congregation, who is known to lead a life unbecoming a Christian, or

who is a member of any infidel society, whether secret or not secret. After the applicant has pledged himself to obey the constitution of the congregation, and the Council has acted favorably on his application, he shall be received according to the prescribed form, or if he presents proper letter of dismission from some other Evangelical Lutheran church, his reception shall be announced publicly before the Congregation.

3) Persons who have not been confirmed, or who have previously been members of other Christian denominations, shall be received through confirmation, and others according to prescribed forms.

§ 2. Duties of members.

1) They shall lead a Christian life and live together in charity, humility, and peace, endeavoring to edify one another in our holy faith through admonition, consolation, and encouragement; promote the unity and welfare of the Congregation; diligently and prayerfully read and study the Word of God, keep the Lord's day holy, diligently attend the public services and devotional meetings of the Congregation, and make a reverent use of the Holy Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; practice private and family worship — all this in order that they themselves may grow in grace and sanctification, and that God's kingdom may be advanced, and his holy name glorified.

2) Every member shall appear before the Church Council when so requested, and shall submit to the regulations and discipline of the Congregation.

3) It shall be the duty of every member, particularly all parents, to provide for the Christian training and education of the young.

4) It shall further be the duty of every member to contribute, according to ability, to the support of the Congregation and the pastor, and to all other necessary objects of church work.

§ 3. If a member neglects any of the above duties it shall be the duty of the Church Council to give timely warning and admonition. It is especially directed, that if any person thus warned and admonished shall persist in wilfully absenting himself from, or despising the public services, or neglects the Christian education of his children, he shall not be permitted to remain a member, but his name shall be stricken from the list of members, and his dismissal shall be announced to the Congregation. A person thus excluded shall also lose all claim to any share of the real or personal property of the Congregation.

ART. VIII.

Congregational Meetings.

§ 1. All congregational meetings shall be called by the pastor or, in case of vacancy, by the secretary of the Church Council, and at least ten days' notice of such meeting shall be given, and in case of a special meeting of the Congregation the subjects to be considered and acted upon shall be stated.

§ 2. Special congregational meetings shall be called when deemed necessary by the pastor, or at the request of a majority of the deacons, or of the trustees, or of seven voting members of the Congregation, provided that such request has been

presented to the pastor in writing at least eight days before the call for the meeting, and that it states the subjects to be acted upon by the Congregation.

§ 3. The annual congregational meeting shall be held, *in October*..... when the report of the Church Council, a summary of the treasurer's accounts, and reports from the various societies and other branches of activity within the church shall be rendered. At this meeting there shall be elected a secretary, deacons, trustees, and other officers, lay delegates and their alternates, and all matters which properly may be presented shall be acted upon.

§ 4. Only those persons are entitled to vote at the meetings of this Congregation who are confirmed, who have attained the age of..... years, who are members in regular standing, and against whom no charges for violation of this Constitution are pending before the Church Council. It is, however, provided that women may not be elected members of the Board of Administration, nor delegates to Synod or Conference meetings.

§ 5. A majority of all the votes cast shall be conclusive in all cases, unless otherwise provided. If the votes for and against a given proposition are equally divided, the chairman of the meeting shall cast the deciding vote.

§ 6. After any question is decided, it shall not be brought up anew unless five of those who voted in the majority so request.

§ 7. The minutes of the proceedings at congregational meetings shall be properly read and approved.

§ 8. Congregational meetings shall be opened and closed with prayer.

ART. IX.

Elections.

§ 1. All elections of officers of this Congregation shall, if practicable, take place at the annual meeting of the Congregation. Deacons and trustees shall be chosen by ballot, and other officers may also be chosen in the same manner, if the Congregation so decides.

§ 2. In case of vacancy the Church Council shall, if deemed advisable, invite an orthodox Lutheran minister or theological student to preach a sermon on an appointed day, in order that the Congregation may, to some extent, learn to know him. The Church Council shall then publicly announce, on two successive Sundays, a certain day for a congregational meeting when election of pastor is to take place. At such an election each legal voter shall, when his name is called by the chairman, give his vote, orally, for or against the person voted for. If the candidate receive two thirds of all the votes cast he is elected. The Congregation shall at the same time fix the pastor's annual salary and other perquisites. A certificate of the election, signed by the chairman and secretary, shall be delivered to the Church Council, who shall then, on the strength thereof, execute and send a call to the person elected. Should the prescribed number of votes not be attained, or should the person elected not accept the call within 60 days after the executing and forwarding of the call, the Church Council shall invite another, and proceed in the order prescribed. The Church Council may, when desirable, consult the Congregation as to who shall be invited to preach.

When a pastor is to be called, it is advisable for the Congregation to consult the President of the Conference in regard to the most available candidate.

§ 3. If the Congregation be united with one or more other congregations in one charge, the Church Councils of the several congregations shall meet jointly and propose a candidate for election, which is to be held separately in each congregation. Two thirds of all the votes in the whole charge and a majority of the votes in each individual congregation shall be necessary for election. In all other respects the order of procedure shall be identical with that stated in the preceding paragraph.

§ 4. If an assistant pastor is needed, he shall be elected at a regular congregational meeting. When the Church Council deems the services or an assistant pastor no longer necessary, they shall refer the matter to the Congregation, and if the Congregation is of the same opinion, the Church Council shall give him written notice thereof; but he shall have the right to remain in office for three months after receiving such formal notification.

ART. X.

Appeals.

Should contentions arise (which God forbid!), which the Congregation is unable to adjust, either party, or both, may appeal to the Conference, whose decision shall be final.

ART. XI.

Right of Property.

In case of a schism of the Congregation (which

may God graciously prevent!), its real and personal property shall belong to those who faithfully adhere to this Constitution, and remain in connection with the Synod with which the Congregation was connected before the division; and in case of the dissolution of the congregation, all its property shall fall to (insert here the legal name of the board of missions of the Synod, or of the conference to which the congregation belongs, including the name of the conference) of the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod.

ART. XII.

Amendments and By-Laws.

§ 1. This Constitution can be modified only in the following way:

Any proposed alteration or amendment must be made at the annual meeting of the Congregation. If it is approved by a two-thirds' majority vote of the Congregation, it must be reported to the Synod at the next convention of that body for its sanction. If it receives the sanction of the Synod, it must again be submitted to the congregation at its next annual meeting. If it is again approved by a two-thirds' majority vote, it shall thereby become a part of this Constitution.

§ 2. It is expressly ordained that Articles II, XI, and XII §2, and §§ 1 and 2 of Article III, never shall be altered or amended.

§ 3. This Congregation shall have power to make such by-laws as may be necessary and not in conflict with this Constitution.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be and abide with this Congregation, now and forever! Amen.

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